



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Helene Nelson, Secretary

May 23, 2006
For Immediate Release

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TALK TO YOUR TEENS ABOUT PREGNANCY PREVENTION

May is Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month

MADISON – State health officials are encouraging teens across Wisconsin to make responsible decisions about their health. According to the *Wisconsin Youth Sexual Behavior and Outcomes 1993-2005* report, the number of births to teens age 15-19 decreased from 7,057 in 1993 to 5,996 in 2004.

“While we are happy that our efforts are producing positive results for some, we still have significant room to improve for all,” said Dr. Sheri Johnson, State Health Officer.

In addition to poor birth outcomes frequently experienced by teen mothers, there are social and economic consequences that affect teen parents, their children and society for years to come. Teen parents are less likely to complete high school and are more likely to be single parents. Boys who become teen fathers get less education and get paid less over the years, and teen parents are more likely to live in poverty compared to other teens. Studies also show that many of the babies born to teen parents are more likely to become runaways, be physically abused, neglected or abandoned.

“Teenagers need accurate information and strong support systems in order to make healthy decisions,” said Johnson. “We know that clear, consistent communication with youth is more influential than parents may realize in the decisions teens make about sex.”

To help children make healthy decisions to avoid unwanted pregnancies, parents should:

- Be clear about your own sexual values and attitudes.
- Talk with your children early and often about sex – and be specific.
- Help your teenagers understand they have options for the future that are more attractive than early pregnancy and parenthood.
- Let your children know that you highly value education.

It is realistic to assume that some teens will be sexually active. Therefore, it is important that they know the risks and how to protect themselves and their partner from pregnancy and diseases. Anyone who is sexually active can get Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) from intercourse, oral sex, anal sex and some forms of mutual masturbation.

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“All STDs are serious and can cause long-term health issues such as infertility and some types of cancer,” said Johnson. “Some STDs are treatable, but cannot be cured, such as HIV/AIDS and herpes.”

The Department of Health and Family Services runs several programs to assist teens in making decisions regarding sexual activity: The Wisconsin Abstinence Initiative for Youth (WAIY), the Brighter Futures program, and the Family Planning Waiver Program.

The Wisconsin Abstinence Initiative for Youth is funded by a federal grant and promotes abstinence until marriage. The goal of the initiative is to motivate, inspire and support youth to choose abstinence.

Brighter Futures is another Department program to prevent and reduce teen pregnancy. It targets at-risk youth through programs that increase academic achievement, self-esteem, and inter-personal communication skills.

The Family Planning Waiver Program is a Medicaid program for low income women between 15 and 44 years of age. Women are able to get confidential family planning health care services and supplies at no charge in order to prevent unintended pregnancy. The program serves women who are at or below 185% of the federal poverty level.

For more information about Wisconsin’s efforts to reduce teen pregnancy, go to <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/teenpregnancy>

To view the *Wisconsin Youth Sexual Behavior and Outcomes 1993-2005* report, go to <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/stats/pdf/SexualBehavior05.pdf>

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